

AN

Affectionate Address

to

YOUNG PEOPLE;

Published with

A design of ENGAGING their ATTENTION

to those

Subjects

WHICH MOST AFFECT THEIR

Present and Future Welfare.

BY ABRAHAM GREENWOOD.

*So being Affectionately desirous of You, we were willing to have
imparted unto You, not the GOSPEL OF GOD only, but our
own SOULS also, because Ye were dear unto Us.*

PAUL.

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AN

AFFECTIONATE

Address

TO

Young People.

My dear Young Friends.

THE greatest and wisest men have, in all ages, been impressed with a sense of the importance of religion; and let the profane disregard it, and despise it as they may, it will be found at last a solemn and sacred reality. And I cannot but be of opinion, that it is a peculiar felicity to have our hearts brought to reverence it in early life. *Timothy* from a child knew the Holy Scriptures; *Obadiah* feared the Lord from his youth; *Josiah* sought God while his heart was yet tender; and *David* from his youth was under the teaching and guidance of the Almighty. This he acknowledges with gratitude as a blessing of great value, *Thou, O God, hast taught me from my youth.* Under such teaching, the truths and the duties of religion made the deepest impression on his mind. His parents had trained him up in the way he should go, the Priests and the Levites had given him instruction; but whoever were the instruments, or whatever were the means of leading him into the way everlasting, he justly ascribes the effect to God.

Whoever

Whoever has experienced the advantage of an early acquaintance with religion, will certainly be very desirous that others may enjoy the same privilege. We have an instance of this in the Royal Psalmist, He invites even children to hearken to him, tells them he is desirous of becoming their tutor, and wishes to teach them the fear of the Lord. But I beg leave, my dear young friends, to call your particular attention, in the present ADDRESS, to the following WORDS—

PSALM CXIX. 9.

Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word.

I have selected these words from a Psalm which may justly be termed a very precious part of Sacred Scripture. It is remarkable for its length; but that it might not appear tedious, it is divided into 22 parts, according to the number and order of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Probably we have here a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations at different periods, digested by him in alphabetical order. The general scope of this collection of holy breathings, is to set forth the excellency of the divine word, and to express the sincere and fervent regard which the Psalmist had for it. The lively oracles have here many different names given them, every one of which is significant and expressive.

They are called God's Word, because they proceed out of his mouth, and are the declaration of his mind. When you read your Bibles, my dear young friends, or hear them read, You shall remember that the Almighty is speaking to You, and that they are his very words, they are called his WAY, because they reveal to us the way in which we ought to walk, to the end that we may glorify his name.—They are called his LAWS, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign, and given to us at the eternal standard of right and wrong.—His Statutes, because they are established and settled for ever, and by them the Lord maintains his own honours, and the privileges granted to his people inviolable. They are termed his Ordinances, because ordained and appointed by him.—His Righteousness, because they are holy, just, and good; and perfectly conformable to his own essential moral rectitude.—His Judgments, because they are fram-ed

ed in infinite wisdom ; and will be the standard by which the world will be judged at the last day. And finally, they are called his Testimonies, because they bear witness of his truth his love, his grace and mercy ; and what he will, and will not do, in reference to the children of men, whether good or bad.

The verse which I have selected as the foundation of this Address, relates to young people of both sexes, comprehended under the term—Young Man.—It contains a question of great Importance, *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ?* And a suitable and pertinent answer, *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.* It is an Address to God or an Appeal to him ; which adds to the solemnity of the conclusion. As if the Psalmist had said, “ Lord thou knowest the young people ruin themselves by living at large ; thy word lays open the sovereign remedy ; if they are brought seriously to attend to that, it will lay them in the way everlasting.

By the young man's Way, I understand the general tenor of his life and conduct. This way is supposed to be *polluted* or *defiled* ; as indeed it often is, by many impurities and irregularities. And as young people may be at a loss to know how their way may be cleansed, the man of God's own heart condescendingly undertake to teach them. Here I cannot but remark the great attention the inspired penman show to young people in their writings, particularly David, Solomon and Paul. Sometimes they exhort them with all authority, to remember now their Creator in the days of their youth. Sometimes they encourage them in the pursuit of that which is good, and express their gratitude to God, when the young discover an early regard for the Holy Scriptures, and give evidence of unfeigned faith, and sincere piety. Sometimes they rebuke them for their youthful follies, and solemnly charge them to flee from them, by reminding them, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Sometimes they beseech them, with fatherly tenderness, to hearken to instruction and be wise. *Come ye children, and hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* Nay they represent the Divine being as addressing them in this tender and affectionate language, *My son, give me thine heart.* Sometimes they warn them of the danger to which they are exposed, through the impetuosity of youthful passions, and the corrupting influence of evil example. They entreat them not to walk in the way of their own heart,

heart, nor the sight of their eyes; but to walk in the way of good men, and to keep the path of the righteous; to forsake the foolish and live, and to go in the way of understanding. For he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Sometimes, as knowing the terrors of the Lord, they endeavour to persuade them to attend to that which will be for their everlasting advantage. Thus, my dear young friends, you have, in these sacred writings, line upon line, precept upon precept; and if it please the Almighty to incline your hearts seriously to attend to these instructions, you will learn to cleanse your way, and find the path of peace.

Who, that considers the importance of the rising generation, can be unconcerned upon this head? With respect to myself, as a minister, I freely confess, there is no exercise in which I engage with more cheerfulness and tenderness of spirit, than when I attempt to address young people. My hope of success is chiefly among these; and I long after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ. With the warmest desire, therefore, my young friends, of winning your souls to Christ, and of gaining you over to God and happiness, I would seriously ask you, if your way is not defiled by some evils which the Lord hates;—I would show you how it is to be cleansed;—and endeavour by a few proper motives, to awaken your concern to have it cleansed according to God's word.

1. I would seriously ask you, is not your present way defiled with some of those evils which God hates?

From what I know of my own former propensities, and from what I have observed in others, I fear the ways of many young people are defiled, amongst other vices, by foolishness, heedlessness, disobedience to their parents, falsehood, and impurity.

Would to God I could say, these evils are only to be found in youth! Many who are farther advanced in life, have but too much reason to complain, and to humble themselves before God, for that degree of those evils by which their way is still defiled. But I have now to do with young persons and I am apprehensive, that the season of youth is the time when these pernicious weeds are most apt to over-run the ground.

1. Is your way defiled by folly? The word of inspiration testifies, that childhood and youth are vanity; and that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. Are your thoughts words

words and actions such as wisdom would dictate? or are they such as folly suggests? Foolish jesting and nonsense too often disgrace the conversation of the young. Their parents, their guardians, and their pious friends have often melancholy proofs of this. It is awful indeed when young persons advance to such a pitch of impiety, as to make a mock of sin, when they treat serious things with ridicule, and delight to fit in the seat of the scornful! I will not suppose that this is actually your case; but beware of every thing that has a tendency this way. In children, the rod of correction is to be used, as a mean to cure the folly of the mind. If you are become men and women it is time you should put away childish things. Aspire after that sentiment of dignity and behaviour, which becomes your rational nature, and gives respectability to youth.

I am not intending to condemn that vivacity of mind which is the usual attendant of youthful years; I only wish that it may be under due regulations, and run in a proper channel. That holy religion, which it is my sincere desire and aim to recommend to your choice, does not require you to suppress your native vigour. It does not require you to become formal, gloomy, melancholy, or morose; to have a cloud perpetually on your brow, dejection in your spirits. It is in its very nature, social, benevolent, kind and cheerful. It breaths gentleness and affability. It carries in its train all that is manly, amiable and useful. It inculcates every thing that is lovely. It would be a disgrace to it to imagine, that it is an enemy to cheerfulness and peace. Its tendency is to enoble, to compose, and to cheer the soul. It does not extirpate the affections, but refines them.

What we would warn you then to avoid, is not good humour, but vanity and folly. Young men are to be exhorted to be sober-minded; to cleanse their way from levity and foolishness, by taking heed thereto according to the divine word. Let not your thoughts dwell perpetually on light and trifling things. Let not such subjects be the general topics of your discourse. There is a levity in behaviour as well as in speech, to which some young persons addict themselves, and which, I am sorry to say, they even bring with them into places devoted for the worship of God. Of all things this should be guarded against, as what borders upon profaneness. It is hurtful to others, as well as reproaching to those who give way to it; nay, it is a kind of insult of

ferred to that God, whose worship ought to be attended to with reverence and godly fear.

2. Is your way defiled by heedlessness, and forgetfulness of things serious and profitable? Forgetfulness proceeds, in a great measure from want of attention. Men soon forget what they see or hear, if they do not lay it at heart, or think seriously upon it. Many young people trifle away the precious hours of early life, in a careless, heedless, and unthinking manner. Instructions with them are soon forgotten; reproofs and admonitions presently slip their memories, and leave no traces upon the mind. An ingenious youth would blush to be told the same thing a second time, and a tender heart would be affected at the thought of a renewed reproof for the same offence. Many of you would do so in things of a civil nature; but alas! how forgetful are you of the things which belong to your peace!

Sometimes you feel conviction under the ministry of the word, and form, at the moment, resolutions of amendment. But how soon are those forgotten! It may be, that some of you forget all before you reach home, or even before you leave the place of devotion.

Take heed to your way according to the divine word, that you may trifle no longer with matters of infinite importance. Be not carried away by the impetuosity of your passions, or with the many artifices which are constantly employed to inflame them, to a forgetfulness of God, of your own souls, or of things sacred and divine. Let not the voice of wisdom be unheard, or unheeded, amidst the din and tumult of the world; that voice which calls upon you to remember now your Creator in the days of your youth; and which reminds you, that for walking in the way of your own heart and the sight of your eyes, God will bring you into judgment. They who forget him, shall be turned into hell, together with the wicked and profane.

3. Is your way defiled by disobedience to your parents, or to those whom God in his providence hath placed over you? Impatient of restraint, the giddy youth is never at rest, till he gets from under the yoke of parental authority. Before young people arrive at the age of twenty, they often think themselves able enough to direct their own steps.—They little consider that this is the most difficult period of their lives. Yes, my young friends, it is now that your character is to be stamped for the present world; I had almost said, for that likewise which is to come. Never will you

you all need so much instruction and caution as now. You yourselves must be sensible, that some young persons, about this period of life, have run into shameful extravagances and irregularities. They have turned a deaf ear to the instructions and warnings of parents, of ministers, of masters, and friends; and by so doing have taken such steps, as have sunk them into misery and wretchedness all their days. They have had time enough to lament, that they once hated instruction, despised reproof, obeyed not the voice of their teachers, nor inclined their ear to those that instructed them. My dear young friends, as you value your own souls, as you regard your own comfort, even for the present life, cleanse your way from disobedience.

The religion of Jesus strongly enforces relative duties. According to its dictates, children should honour and obey their parents in every thing lawful, as they would approve themselves to God, and have his blessing upon them. Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Remember your obligations, and be careful to pay all filial duty to them. Hearken to their counsels and commands; and yield a submissive, cheerful, and ready obedience to them, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has made it your duty so to do. Obedience to your parents is highly proper and requisite in itself; it is a just debt according to the law of nature, and of all civilized nations. Nay, it is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.

4. Is your way defiled by falsehood? Are you addicted to the vice of lying? The divine word inform us, that men go astray as soon as born, speaking lies. There is a deep-rooted treachery in the human heart, which discovers itself very early, in a proneness to speak falsehood. Let me intreat you, my dear youths, to cleanse your way from this by taking heed thereto, according to God's word.

Indeed, the vice of lying has ever been held in abhorrence by men of integrity and uprightness. Heathens as well as christians, men of all ranks and professions have agreed to condemn this vice. There is an eternal obligation founded in the nature of things, which binds us to speak the truth upon every subject. Lying is not only very highly displeasing to the God of truth, but it is base and mean in itself, and utterly unworthy the dignity of your rational nature. The author of our being has given us the use of speech, that it might be the interpreter of our

thoughts. The liar yields himself to Satan's power. The Devil is the father of lies. He was a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets; and when men invent and speak lies, it is Satan who fills their hearts to do it. Peter said to *Ananias*, *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie?* Did you ever think of this my dear young friends? Would you give up yourselves to the guidance of that foul spirit? Would you be agent for the father of lies, speak under his influence and so prove yourselves his children? God forbid. A lying tongue is one of those evils which God hates. For this iniquity, *Gabezi*, the prophet's servant, was afflicted with a grievous leprosy to the day of his death. For this, *Ananias* was struck dead, and his wife being a partner with him in his iniquity, was a sharer in this punishment, if you are habitually guilty of the same crime, hope not for impunity. For though sentence against this evil may not be executed speedily, the God of truth has told you, that whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, shall be excluded from the celestial paradise; the gates of heaven shall be shut against him, and the gates of hell be opened to receive him; for, if David resolved, that he who told lies should not tarry in his sight, you need not wonder at the solemn declaration of him, who is glorious in holiness. That all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

If you have been addicted to this vice, may God give you timely repentance, and assist you, by his grace from this moment to cleanse your way from it!

5. Permit me to ask you, in the last place, Is your way defiled by youthful lusts, or any of the hateful practises of impunity, which are but too common in this abandoned age, I will not attempt to give you a catalogue of them, or stun your ears by a description of them in detail. It is a shame to speak of those things which are done of some men in secret. I would rather exhort you to flee from them, as fast, and as far as you can. Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and threaten its utter and eternal destruction. Here perhaps your greatest danger lies.

Read the words of God with diligence; observe and be deterred by the threatenings denounced against those who live in the practice of any species of uncleanness. There is something very affecting in the representation given us of the end of the debauchee. He is described as *mourning at last when his flesh and his body are consumed*; and as looking back into the days of his youth, with painful remorse, and saying,

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saying, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.* The poor wretch, following the instigations of impure desire, proceeded from one degree of lasciviousness to another, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for its life. He got dishonor and reproach, which could not be wiped away. He got a wound of tormenting remorse, which was like a dart striking through his liver. He had needlessly run into those ways that take hold on hell, going down to the chambers of death. Proo. v. 12, &c. Observe this dreadful example; tremble at it, and avoid it.

But though I am unwilling to suppose you guilty of such abominable practices, I must intreat you to avoid all such steps as lead to them. Beware of having any society with the loose and the profligate, as you would shun pestilential infection. When sinners entice thee, content thou not.—Shun all improper connections, and not only so, but guard against all impure thoughts, obscene language, and indecent behaviour. Abstain from all appearance of these evils. Hate even the garment spotted by the flesh. Remember who it is that hath laid, *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge.*

I forbear to enlarge the catalogue of the vices of youth, because I would not willingly make this part of my address tedious and irksome to you. It is too well known, that the way of some young persons is defiled by indolence and sloth; of others, by a scandalous profanation of God's holy day, thro' which they cast off the fear of their Maker, and expose themselves to such temptations and snares, as have hurried on multitudes from one degree of wickedness to another, till they have plunged themselves into destruction and perdition. O that my head was waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night in behalf of such unhappy youths. The way of some, otherwise hopeful young men, is defiled, now shall I speak it, with intemperance, and worse than brutal excess. They harden themselves and one another in rioting and drunkenness, till, by degrees, they become so bold in sin, as to glory in their shame. This, alas! is the disgrace of the rising age. It opens a door to every other species of iniquity, and stupifies the conscience against conviction. In a word,

it

it is the high road to infamy and misery in this world, and to eternal destruction in the next.

Exhortations, entreaties, sighs, and tears, are generally lost on youths of this description. They hate and despise reproof. To the reading of serious discourses they have no inclination. But the God that made them has access to their hearts. He can open their ear to discipline, and seal instruction to their minds. Poor young men we will not give you up, as altogether in a hopeless case.

Let me entreat you then, by all that is sacred and valuable, to be concerned to cleanse your way from these vices, and other of a similar kind, to which youths are prone. By the practice of them you would break through the bonds of a pious education, and the restraint of friendly admonitions; you would throw away the prime of life; you would violate conscience, and lay a foundation for the bitterest reflections; you would greatly injure society, you would wound the hearts of those who love you most, you would gratify Satan, and strengthen his cause, you would condemn the authority, the threats and promises of your Maker; in a word, you would inevitably plunge into misery here, and expose yourselves to everlasting damnation hereafter.

Stop, stop, young sinners, in your wild and thoughtless course. Proceed no farther in the ways of death. One step more may plunge you headlong into the hopeless abyss. To day, if you will hear the voice divine, harden not your hearts by the fatal resolution of still going on to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Stifle not the conviction of your own consciences, the monitors within your bosoms, which still though faintly, speak for God, and warn you of your danger. Cherish serious reflections; and beg of God with earnest and preserving importunity, to save you from impending ruin. Take with your words, and cry unto him with your whole heart, " Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for art the Lord my God." O seek the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him, for he is still near, and still ready abundantly to pardon.—I proceed

II. To call your attention to the direction given for cleansing your way; and that is, *by taking heed thereto, according to the divine word.*

Do you wish my dear friends, to have your way cleansed? May I take this for granted? If so, the remedy is here proposed, and your most serious attention to it is demanded.—Take up that holy but muchneglected book—the Bible—and with

with uplifted eyes, and intense desire after the instruction of life, read and ponder the messages of salvation.

It is highly proper that you should endeavour to obtain just views of the great principles of natural religion. But you ought more especially to be concerned to understand the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. The sacred scriptures should, for this end, engage your most serious attention. If you wish to know the truth in its native purity, consult the oracles of God. Consider the important end for which they are put into your hands. These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.

The divine word is able to make you willing to salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. But pains and application are necessary to be used. Good heed must be taken to what this sacred book sets before you. ~*Prov. ii. 1, &c.* “ My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

This sacred book of which we speak, was not given us for the comparatively insignificant purposes of amusement, of criticism, or of subtle disputation. The divine gift is put into our hands, and bestowed upon us, for ends infinitely more important; to inform our judgments, to awaken and convince our consciences, to deliver us from the power and dominion of our sins, to testify of Jesus, and to lead us to him, whom to know is life eternal. How needful and important then is the exhortation, and how powerful the persuasion subjoined in the words of our divine Redeemer, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

In this divine book the perfect rule of rectitude is given, by our thoughts, our words, and our actions should be governed*. Here we have that sacred law which is holy, just

* The late Sir Wm. Jones, at the end of his Bible, wrote the following note: “ I have regularly and attentively read these Holy Scriptures, and “ am of opinion, that this Great Volume, independently of its divine origin, “ contains more sublimity and beauty, more pure morality, more important “ history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected “ from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been “ composed.”

just and good ; the sum of which is, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." The more refined systems of morality invented by men bear no comparison with this rule of duty. It regards not barely the outward actions of men ; it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It forbids not only outward offences, but the least motion of the mind towards that which is evil. The divine law is spiritual, and exceeding broad.

It must be by taking heed to this part of the divine word, my dear youths, that you must learn to know yourselves, the sinfulness of your depraved state, and the errors and impurities of your way. Compare your hearts and lives with that holy rule which God has given you. Look into this clear and perfect mirror. Examine yourselves with seriousness, closeness, and impartiality. You will soon discover that you have great need of being cleansed ; that you are all as an unclean thing ; that the thoughts and imaginations of your hearts have been evil continually, and that your whole life and your way have been full of sin and impurity. Take heed to them according to the divine word. " The entrance of thy word, says David, giveth light ; it giveth understanding to the simple." By the help of this light you will discover in yourselves, the base passions of pride, avarice, anger, selfishness, and sensuality. You will be led into those chambers of imagery, upon the walls of which are pourtrayed, the wild deities of your own polluted imagination. You will see yourselves to be guilty, helpless, miserable creatures ; not only unworthy of the favour and friendship of God, but justly deserving of his wrath.

This sight of yourselves is mortifying and humiliating ; but for that reason it is salutary. It is absolutely necessary in order to your unfeigned repentance, and consequently to your being pardoned and saved, that a sense of sin be deeply impressed on your hearts. Now the divine word is the mean by which the Holy Spirit reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discoverer of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

You see this exemplified in the case of the apostle Paul when relating what he had felt of the power of the divine word,

word, he says, " I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and died." When it came in the light and energy of the Holy Spirit, when it fixed on his mind and conscience, it convinced him of sin; he saw that the worst punishment was due to him; sin revived in his conscience, in all its hideous forms; his vain confidence died with him, and in the fence of his own soul, he fell under the sentence of death and condemnation. And thus by the law he became dead to the law, that he might live unto God.

The sacred books direct you where to look for purification and cleansing. It holds forth unto you, and all-sufficient Saviour, who bear our sins in his own body on the tree; who put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; who loved his church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, and present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, here you are directed to the LAMB OF GOD which taketh away the sins of the world; delivers from its guilt, its power, and its pollution. Here you have the fountain of cleansing clearly pointed out, the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Here you are told, that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.

Take heed of this, my dear young friends, as a matter of the greatest importance to you. If sensible of your impurity, and of the defilement of your way, you sincerely confess your sins to a forgiving God, and cry for mercy through the mediation of Jesus Christ, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. He will accomplish in you the gracious promises of his word, " Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

Here is all that you want for the cleansing of your way. The divine law discovers to you your disease, the blessed gospel points out your remedy. The one lays open your impurity, the other shews you how you are to be cleansed.

If any thing is done to purpose, the cleansing work must begin

begin at your hearts. A man may, in some measure, be pure in his behaviour ; pure in his own eyes, and pure in the eyes of others, and yet never be washed from his filthiness. The Jews, in the days of our Lord's sojourning among them, were very attentive to a ceremonial cleansing of themselves. They observed divers washings ; but alas ! It appears from what Jesus said to them, that they were utter strangers to purity of heart, and to that way in which alone polluted sinners can be cleansed from their filthiness. This way is clearly set before you in the divine word. O that you may, by grace be enabled to take heed to it !

It is the blood of the everlasting covenant that purgeth the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. It is by faith in Jesus that men's hearts are purified. We are delivered from the power of our sins no other way, than by the grace and Spirit of him, whom the father sent to bless us, by turning away every one of us from our iniquities. The end to be answered by his giving himself for us is, that he might purify us unto himself, as a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

All this is discovered to us in that blessed word to which your attention is called. So that if it is a sword to wound us, it wounds that we may be made whole. If it brings us low by our convincing power, it is that it may raise us up, by leading us to the All-sufficient remedy. If it strips us of our fancied wealth, it is that it may possess us of durable riches and righteousness. If it shews us our impurity, it is to lead us to the fountain of cleansing.

The injunctions, the cautions, the warnings, and admonitions of the divine word, should be constantly and carefully regarded by you. You have here line upon line, and precept upon precept. You are warned what to shun, and directed what to pursue. The law is a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths.

The duties men owe to one another, as members of civil society, are here set forth in the plainest manner. The knowledge which the Pagan world had of morality, and the proper conduct of life was, in a great measure, derived from the sacred writings. Their corrected notions were drawn from this grand source, through channels unseen, and greatly diversified. If the Bible had not existed, the heathen sages would have been strangers to many ideas and sentiments interwoven with their discourses, which they ascribe to the mere light of nature, and their own invention.

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Let the Bible then be your counsellor and guide in every step you take. Let this be the map to direct your journey through the perplexing wilderness of this world. Treasure up its injunctions; hide within your hearts its cautions and warnings, that you may escape the snares by which many are entangled, and be able to say with the pious King of Israel, " By the word of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer."

Consult this sacred rule for direction, in all the duties of private and public worship; in all your social intercourses; in all your transactions with the world; in all your demeanour towards your superiors and your equals; and in all the relations in which you stand, as children, brothers, sisters, friends, or servants. If with ardour and intenseness of mind you are saying, " O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," you will have your request most effectually answered, when God enables you by his grace and spirit, to take heed thereto according to his word.

This blessed book furnishes the best rules for the preservation of a pure conscience, as our evangelical poet, Dr. Watts, has beautifully paraphrased the words under consideration.

*How shall the young secure their hearts,
And guard their lives from sin ?
Thy word the choicest rules imparts,
To keep the conscience clean.
'Tis like the sun a heav'nly light,
That guides us all the day ;
And thro' the dangers of the night,
A lamp to lead our way.*

The examples of good and holy men are here set before you, for your imitation. Take heed unto them. Especially mark the examples of those whose piety shone with peculiar lustre in the days of their youth. As that of Abel, of Isaac, of Joseph, of Samuel, of Obadiah, of David, of Josiah, of Timothy, and of others.

The inspired writers were well acquainted with the influence of example on the human mind; and, therefore, they have exhibited to our view, a cloud of witnesses, that by contemplating the excellencies of their characters, we might be convinced of our own duty, and quickened to the

practice of it still more forcibly than by the precepts and directions. The intention of this exhibition of pious and worthy characters, seems to be expressed in the cogent and energetic words of our divine Saviour, " Go thou, and do likewise." Or in the language of his holy apostle, " Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises." The command binds us to our duty, example encourages to performance, that nothing might be wanting to exerte us to cleanse our way.

In the divine word you will find the most powerful motives and incentives to holiness. Here the Grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Here the love of Christ is set before us, in all its constraining energy.

Here strongest motives fling,
Here sacred violence assaults the soul ;
Here nothing but compulsion is forborene.

YOUNG.

Every doctrine of this sacred book is a doctrine according to godliness. The truth here revealed sanctifies the mind of him that receives it. Thus speaks an inspired apostle, " Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Here you are drawn with the bands of love. By the great and precious promises here given, you are induced to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. By these you are made partakers of the divine nature, by way of conformity, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, through lust. In the glass of the gospel, you behold the glory of God, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

By attending to the divine word, under his gracious and powerful influence, your minds will be excited, to ingenuous sorrow for your past offences, to a fixed resentment against sin, to an ardent desire after holiness, to a warm attachment of heart to the chief good, and a sincere affection to your fellow-men. It will diffuse a sacred glow of gratitude and joy through your whole souls. It will interweave itself with all the practical powers of your minds,

give

give spirit and vigour to your whole frame, elevate your affections above the perishable things of this world, and, in one word, it will make you holy and happy.

Thus, my dear young friends, the question is answered, Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. What remains, but that we should.

III. Endeavour, by a few proper motives, to awaken your concern to have your way cleansed? The celebrated Roman orator said to his auditors, on a particular occasion, "I entreat you to hear me candidly." I have the greater reason to adopt his entreaty, because I well know, that those giddy youths who want admonition most, are the least inclined to receive it. Nothing seems more difficult than to obtain the attention of such minds, to a grave and serious address.

Let me beg of you, however, as a brother and a friend, to suffer the word of exhortation. I wish not to mislead your imagination by the phantoms of enthusiasm, not to chill your vivacity by the gloomy spectres of superstition. What I wish to recommend to you imp lies nothing illiberal, nothing vulgar. That holy religion which you are invited to make your choice, requires not a single action, word, look or thought, of which you can have any reason to be ashamed, in any company, or on any occasion. The directions given by the apostle Paul, to Timothy and Titus, who where both his pupils and friends, respecting the manner in which they should treat the youths of their days, you have heard repeated; "Young men exert to be sober-minded. Entreat the younger men as brethren." These directions I would wish you to follow.—Let me remind you then,

1. That the cleansing enquired after in the words under consideration, is absolutely necessary to your final happiness. With your hearts unrenewed, and your ways uncleansed, it is impossible you should enter into the kingdom of heaven. No unclean thing can be admitted there. If your impurity be found upon you, when you die, and not be washed away the gates of paradise will be for ever shut against you.—None but the pure in heart can see God; without holiness none can behold his face with comfort. What I would urge upon your consciences, therefore it is of infinite moment. Your everlasting happiness depends upon it.

Cleansing work must be done in time, or not at all; and that

that time is hastening away. It will soon be said, by the supreme and righteous Judge, "He that is holy, let him be holy still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still.

If your hearts and your ways are cleansed according to God's word, and through the power of his grace and Spirit, you will be in a state of happy preparation for the society, the employment and enjoyments of heaven. You may then with others of God's dear children, give thanks to the Father who hath made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. You may then even amidst the tribulations of this world, rejoice in hope of the glory of God, as knowing that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Dare not to treat this matter lightly. It is not a vain thing; it is for your life. As you value your own souls, and their eternal well being, as you value the everlasting enjoyment of God in his kingdom of glory, be concerned to have your hearts and your ways cleansed.

2. This cleansing is conducive to true felicity even in the present world. They are the enemies of our souls who would persuade you, that a religious life is destitute of all enjoyment. It is true, you are required to avoid those pleasures which are visionary, ensnaring, and destructive.—They are mingled with regret, and will be succeeded with lasting anguish. They will be the very gall of bitterness in the end. Should you pursue these, you would moan at the last in agony and despair. It is madness indeed, to call that pleasure, by which the soul is enslaved and defiled, the conscience wounded, God dishonoured, and the man destroyed.

Do not conceive of a life of devotedness to the love and service of the Redeemer, as a dull and heavy business, or a burdensome task, to which a man, by hard necessity, is forced to submit. Conceive of it rather, as the highest glory of your nature, as what ought to be the very joy of your hearts, and the delightful entertainment of your souls. Is not conformity to your Maker's will, and the enjoyment of his favour, the great end of your existence? Is not devotedness to him the highest improvement of your intellectual powers? And must it not afford the highest entertainment of which you are capable?

Religion, my beloved youths, is so far in its genuine nature,

ture, from abriging you of any real satisfaction or freedom that it may easily be made to appear, that no true liberty, or real felicity can be enjoyed without it. It leads to enjoyments which are solid, lasting and pure. It composes, it cheers and delights the heart. Its yoke is easy, its ways are pleasantness, and its paths peace. It lays the pleasing injunction upon its followers, to rejoice in the Lord always, yea, to rejoice evermore. What can be more animating and engaging than the description which is given of it by one who knew its power, and enjoyed its comforts? "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This my young friends, is the highest felicity that can be had in this world.

3. Thus you will effectually secure your characters, both in the world and in the church of Christ. A good character is one of those things that should be pursued and preserved, in order that we may the better glorify God, and do good to those about us. A good name is said to be better than precious ointment, and rather to be chosen than great riches.

Your going to this or that place of worship will not secure your characters from contempt, unless your way be cleansed by an attention to God's word. Let your profession be as fair as it may, if you indulge in known wickedness, sooner or later, your iniquity will find you out. Sin will not go unpunished; and you may expect that if you care not for the honour of God's name, he will care as little for that of yours; he will suffer you to be rolled into the dirt of reproach. — "Him that honoureth me, will I honour; but he that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed."

It is not the place of your residence, nor what stations in life you occupy, much less having a high conceit of yourselves, or trumpeting your excellence to others, that will gain you a good name, but a chaste conversation coupled with fear. It is this that will secure you from contempt; it is this that will set you among the honourable of the earth; and what is more, will make you our joy and crown of rejoicing another day.

4. The blessing of God stands connected with such a life, both in this world, and the world to come, It was once foolishly and falsely said of Balaam, "I wot that he whom thou blessed is blessed; and he whom thou cursed is cursed." Such power no creature possesses; it belongs to God alone.

Nor

Nor do I mean barely the smiles of his providence attending your undertakings; for these a man may have while under the curse of God. I mean having an interest in spiritual blessings, blessings bestowed by God as the God of all grace. And this according to the whole tenor of scripture, is the privilege of all those who take heed to their way according to his word. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners; nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." "Blessed are the undefiled in their way, who walk in the law of the Lord." All the blessings pronounced by our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, belong to such persons as are enabled to cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to his word. Read them and see whether they are your own. If they are, take the comfort, and give God the praise.

Lastly, By thus taking heed to your ways, you will become blessings to society wherever you reside; blessings to the church, and to your country. Death is daily taking one or other of our choicest member out of each. My dear youth, how are these breaches to be repaired? The hopes of all your friends rest upon you. What say you? Are you willing to disappoint us? Nay, rather refresh our bowels in the Lord!

Consider, young people, how much you exercise the hopes and fears of your parents and friends. Their wishes and their anxious expectations centre in you; in their fond imaginations they see in you their place; not only in the possession of their dwelling houses, their estates, and earthly enjoyments, but of their stations in christian society.—I now consider you as blessed with parents who fear God, and discovers a zeal for your welfare and salvation. This is far from being the privilege of all. There are men and women denominated parents, who themselves live without God in the world, and who train up their offspring for the destroyer.—Merciful Creator of Mankind! Have pity on the multitudes of young people, who are led into the ways of destruction by the vile example of their own ungodly parents!

But I suppose you, my young friends, to have parents worthy of the name; Parents, who have made the Jewish leader's resolution their own, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Parents who have made it their study

study and endeavour to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; to teach you his way, and to engage your attention to it, by their own example. What a favour is it to have such parents ! How thankful should you be for the unspeakable blessing ! And how should you be concerned to set their anxious hearts at rest respecting you ! Who can describe the tenderness they feel for you ? Who can tell how earnestly they long to see in you the evidence of real piety ? For this their prayers have been constantly offered up to the Author of your being. What heart can conceive the transports they feel, when they think they have any reason to conclude that their requests have been answered on your behalf !

" Our sons," say they, " shall be as plants grown up in their youth; and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace. Yes, they shall be plants in God's garden, columns in his building ; and we their parents shall see it, and go down to the grave in peace." O happy thoughts, could we but see them realized !"

Ye are witnesses, and God also, how tenderly we love you, and how greatly we travail in pain that Christ may be formed in you.

I shall now take my leave of you, most earnestly beseeching the Almighty to make this plain and simple address of real and everlasting advantage to your souls. To his hand I commit you. and in the hope of his blessing on my poor endeavours, I would ascribe to his name, all honour and glory both now and ever more, Amen.

END OF THE ADDRESS TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

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